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ABSTRACT

Although in recent years federal, state and local initiatives have been directed toward improving the education of Hispanic children, no significant impacts have as yet been made. The major weakness may be that strategies are still being designed against the characteristics of the larger society and not against the particular minority group. Federal funding has been small, both in the number of federal dollars as well as in the percentage of target population served. The strongest federal effort has been funding for the bilingual education programs, and these have been enthusiastically received by the target population. However, hampering the success of bilingual education has been (1) the lack of a philosophical base, (2) inappropriate research and development efforts, (3) lack of leadership for proper program implementation, and (4) the "poorly conceived and even more poorly implemented" evaluation of bilingual education by the American Insitute for Research for the U.S. Office of Education. Problems in the education of Hispanic Americans are not limited to the elementary-secondary level, for lack of both federal and institutional responses have essentially excluded Hispanics from participation in Higher Education. Hispanic American leadership is sorely needed for the education of Hispanic American children; coalitions must be developed and directed to work toward meeting the educational needs of America's eight million Spanish-speaking children. (DS)

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Keynote Address

National Conference on the Education of Hispanics

August 21, 1978

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Intercultural Development Research Association

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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I appreciate the honor bestowed upon me today to come to the nation's capitol and present this keynote address at this impressive meeting of high ranking federal officials, Hispanic educators, and concerned institutions.

It was only a little more than ten years ago that I first visited Washington at the invitation of a newly appointed Hispanic government employee, perhaps the first Hispanic to serve in the United States Office of Education.

Needless to say, many things have happened in this past decade, most important of which are the many opportunities I have had to meet and work with most of the participants present.

Most of us have shared an overriding concern for the education of Hispanic children, and I take this opportunity to present some concerns and issues in this area.

Many years ago I had the good fortune of being tutored by two emminent educational evaluators, Egon Guba and Dan Stufflebeam, and I would like to utilize their approach to evaluation in reviewing the status of Hispanic education in this conference.

Guba and Stufflebeam defined evaluation as the timely and pertinent acquisition of information for decision-making. Instead of perceiving evaluation as a terminal activity, they proposed a continuous and often cyclic process of information acquisition for problem definition, input formulation, program monitoring and determination of success or failure. They divided evaluation activities into four stages: context, design, process and product. Context evaluation asks, "What is the nature of the problem?" Design evaluation addressed the question, "What can be done about it?" Process evaluation asks, "Is the effort working?" and product evaluation questions, "Did the effort work?"

Though the context evaluation of the problems in the education of Hispanic American children was initiated more than ten years ago, it is appropriate to pause and reflect one decade later on the impact that federal and state efforts have had on improved educational opportunities for Hispanic children. In other words, it is necessary to reassess the context of the problem. Public awareness of educational deficiencies, the increased aspirations of the target population, and an ever increasing acceptance of the concept of equality of educational opportunities allow for educational problems to be evaluated in a new and different perspective. For me it has been a long road from the 1966 Tucson conference and my perceptions of educational problems must have changed.

The historical context shows us a dismal picture of the education of the Hispanic minorities.

The social impact of World War II in the 1940s, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and legal challenges to the school's traditional immunity led to a growing public awareness of problems in the education of Hispanic American children.

Emerging information indicated that the picture was gloomier than expected, even by the most extreme pessimists.

A. Hispanic American children were dropping out of school at alarming rates. In different parts of the country, and in different studies, it was estimated that the dropout rate of these children was in excess of 50 percent, and in many cases was closer to 100. The actual number of dropouts became relatively moot when specific studies estimated that in certain populations as many as 20 percent of the children never enrolled in school.

B. Considering the large number of dropouts and the resulting selectiveness of the remaining school population, one would expect that this sample bias would result in an abnormally high performance for those who remained in school. As one critic stated, "Since the school has already eliminated the mentally deficient, the lazy, the unmotivated, those unable to adjust, and those not interested in education, one would expect that the small percent who remain would be efficient, dedicated, motivated, competent and capable of outperforming other unscreened groups of children."

Educational statistics showed otherwise. The remaining Hispanic American children in the school performed deplorably. If one were to compile a composite of various studies, it would show the typical Hispanic child 1.5 years behind national norms at the third grade level, and two years behind at the seventh grade level. Even the few who graduated from the twelfth grade commonly lacked the necessary skills for the pursuit of a higher education.

C. The underachievement of Hispanic children was accompanied by extensive retention in grade and resulting overagedness. In one study, it was ascertained that over 80 percent of Hispanic children had been retained at least once prior to completion of the third grade. In many instances, the acquisition of English as a second language served as a built-in retention device since the language acquisition commonly encompassed a one-year period, and initial readiness and basic skills were delayed until the beginning of the second year in school.

D. The institution of innovative responses frequently proved dysfunctional to Hispanic children. Thus, the extensive implementation of special education programs for the mentally retarded in the 1950s led to massive numbers of

Hispanic children being characterized as such and placed in special programs. In one school district, it was estimated by the U.S. Office of Education that 86 percent of all Hispanic children had at one time or another been placed in a class for the mentally retarded.

Vocational education programs, though successful in building some career skills in Hispanic children, frequently led to a tracking system in which most Hispanic children were placed in pre-vocational and vocational programs regardless of inherent potential, and without the option of transferring back into more academically oriented programs.

E. Emerging information of disciplinary measures, such as suspension and expulsion, indicated a major school system dependence on these measures in dealing with the Hispanic minorities.

The awareness of problems in the education of Hispanic Americans was accompanied by a growing realization that the school systems could and should be held accountable for their failures.

Past rationalizations that the schools had used were no longer deemed acceptable. "Hispanics are not interested in education," "They are not motivated for success," "They don't value education," and "They would rather work than go to school," were becoming harder to accept, particularly when the client population was screaming for schooling and increased educational opportunities.

Responses and alternatives to the context of the 1960s has not resulted in a great reduction in the inadequacies of educational offerings for Hispanic children in the 1970s.

Though many of the children have been the recipients of federal, state and local initiatives in the form of special programs, the effort has been too slow in arriving, too sparse in coverage, and too weak in developing, to provide a significant impact on the target poulation. Though concern and effort have increased, the major breakthrough in minority education is still in the nebulous future.

Perhaps the major weakness in the education of minority children and the implementation of alternative programs is that strategies are still being designed against the characteristics of the larger society, and not against the back drop of the particular minority group.

Special programs have been designed and implemented which identify and address what is perceived as a deficiency in the context of the dominant culture rather than a unique characteristic of a unique minority group.

It is only in the last few years that the federal government is beginning to deal with children in their own setting.

For example, in 1969 Commissioner Bambi Cardenas and I established an early childhood education center for Hispanic children in San Antonio. A key to this program was the provision of educational experiences in a family setting. The key to the early childhood program was the Family Service Center which allowed the program to deal with Hispanic children in the context of the family.

It is only in recent years, almost ten years later, and much to the credit of the present administration that nationwide efforts have been initiated for dealing with children in the comprehensive context of the family.

Time does not allow for a detailed presentation of the federal effort in Hispanic education. At any rate this distinguished audience is well familiar with the various programs which have been implemented in recent years.

The point is that the amount of funding made available to bring about a change in instructional programs for Hispanics has been small, both in the absolute number of federal dollars as well as in the percentage of the target population being served.

The strongest effort of the federal government in responding to the educational needs of Hispanic children has been the funding made available for bilingual education.

In the education of Hispanic Americans, no single program response or alternative has captured the attention, the hearts and the minds of the Hispanic population as bilingual education programs. This program offering has been so widely accepted by the target population that in responding to critics of bilingual education programs, one is reminded of President Abraham Lincoln's response to advocates of slavery. Having listened to extensive arguments in support of slavery, Abraham Lincoln concluded that slavery could not possibly be as good as the arguments indicated since none of the supporters found it so desirable as to wish it upon themselves. Parapharasing President Lincoln's observation, one can conclude that bilingual education cannot possibly be so detrimental when millions of language minorities are wishing it upon themselves.

The effects of this sole response cannot be minimized. It certainly adheres to a concept of adaptability with the resulting situation that the school admits to the need for the institution to change in order to make it compatible with the characteristics of an atypical population . This concept of adaptability was by far the most important outcome of Lau v Nichols. Once and for all, the Supreme Court of the United States upheld the

concept of adaptability indicating that differing school populations required differing educational programs, and that affording different children the same curriculum, the same teachers, textbooks, and programs was a denial of equal educational opportunity.

In practical terms, the implementation of a bilingual education program, inadequate though the program may be, is a milestone in itself, for it is the first time that the Hispanic children seem to hear the school saying, "We accept you as you are, we accept your language," and indirectly, "We accept your ethnicity, heritage, values, traditions, orientations, and we accept your parents."

In spite of the positive aspects of bilingual education programs, their success has been questioned and the whole concept of bilingual education is being held suspect. Advocates of bilingual education are as much to blame for this unhappy circumstance as any other group. The development and implementation of bilingual education programs has failed to provide a philosophical base for bilingual education or a pedagogical acceptance for such a practice. Too much advocacy for bilingual education was justified on the immediate imperative of meeting a need of children of limited English-speaking ability. This shallow rationale for bilingual education constitutes the painting of Hispanic Americans into a limited English-speaking ability corner with resulting temporary or "transitional bilingual education programs."

There has been a most inappropriate research and development effort to precede and accompany the development of bilingual education programs. Whereas other innovative educational activities have been preceded by extensive research and development efforts, in some cases involving scores of millions of dollars, bilingual education programs were implemented in keeping with political expediency, dispersed throughout the country in inadequate pilot projects, each without the sufficient resources for a minimal, let alone a massive research and development effort.

Bilingual education programs have been implemented without the benefits of a national advocacy and support system which would provide the necessary structures for the development of a philosophical base, a massive research and development effort, and the imperative political clout for continued development. The various Hispanic organizations have failed to coalesce into a national support system for bilingual education.

Lastly, bilingual education programs have not utilized the necessary leadership for proper program implementation. On the contrary, evaluations of bilingual education programs identified an unbelievable negligence and incompetence in the implementation of the programs. It is unbelievable that the majority of bilingual education teachers employed in Title VII bilingual education programs were found to have no bilingual skills many years after the programs were implemented.

In fact, it is difficult to speak about bilingual education without reference to the biggest federal government goof in dealing with the education of Hispanic children.

I refer to the infamous evaluation of bilingual education, funded by the U.S. Office of Education, the American Institute for Research (AIR) study conducted for OE's Office of Planning, Budgetting and Evaluation.

This study has been condemned not only by myself, but by Joshua Fishman, Rudy Troike from the Center for Applied Linguistics, Mike O'Malley from NIE, Dr. Leonard Valverde from the Association of Chicanos in Higher Education Dr. Severo Gomez from the Texas Education Agency and virtually every bilingual education professional in the country.

This study ignores the Guba/Stufflebeam evaluation model, and following the implementation of Title VII bilingual education programs, proceeds to invalidly analyze the product of bilingual education while by-passing an assessment of the process of bilingual education.

The study and subsequent information released by the media concludes that bilingual education programs are not very successful with little regard for the inadequacies of design and implementation which the study itself uncovers.

In obvious haste to bring the shortcomings of bilingual education to congressional hearings on appropriations for bilingual education, this poorly conceived and even more poorly implemented study overlooks major discrepancies in the identification of the target population, the selection of comparable control groups, the test instruments used in the study, the amount of time between pre and post testing, lack of consistency in programs being studied, and inadequacy of instructional staff.

Perhaps I belabor the point, but this USOE error has had serious consequences. In the last few months I have seen the AIR report used by defense lawyers in two federal court cases arguing that USOE "proved" that bilingual education is not an adequate program for children of limited English-speaking ability. I therefore call upon the federal officals present here today to demonstrate to this group the worth of this study or to repudiate it as not indicative of the federal commitment to quality in Hispanic education.

Higher Education

Unfortunately, problems in the education of Hispanic Americans are not limited to the elementary and secondary schools. Institutions of higher education display characteristics which indicate an even more alarming exclusion of Hispanic Americans.

Available statistics substantiate that the quantity of Hispanic Americans enrolling in institutions of higher education is small, both in absolute numbers and in the percentages of their ethnic group and of college enrollment. Further evidence indicates that of the number enrolled, as many as 97% drop out of college prior to the completion of a degree program. This compares unfavorably with a 94 percent dropout rate for Blacks and a much smaller 55 percent dropout rate for Anglos.

The federal response to Hispanic Americans in higher education has been even more minimal than the elementary and secondary effort.

In 1967 I was offered by an official in the U.S. Office of Education $300,000 to establish three teacher training summer institutes in Texas to prepare teachers to teach Mexican American children. After traversing the State from border to border, I was only able to obtain commitment from two colleges and returned $100,000 unused.

If I were to do the same thing today, I would probably be torn apart in the stampede for the federal money.

The sad truth is that the increased interest is much more based on programmatic financial concerns than on an altruistic educational interest.

Past national recessions, the ever increasing costs of education, Proposition 13 cutbacks, and the plight of state research and development funds has created an unprecedented competitiveness for the federal dollar.

This change in attitude would not be bad if it were accompanied by a change in attitude toward the target population. Unfortunately, this is not the case and institutions

of higher education provide little advocacy, support, reinforcement or impact in the very programs which they operate. Institutions of higher education, however involved they may be in Hispanic education, consistently fail to provide hard money, tenure or Hispanic staffing or advocacy for minority children.

It is amazing how often I have heard university social scientists employed in federally funded programs testify in court that Hispanic children performing 2 grade levels below the norm are not really underachieving when you consider that they are poor, Spanish-speaking, Hispanics.

There is one more issue that I wish to present before we adjourn to our group sessions.

This issue I will direct to my Hispanic brethren for your consideration. This issue is "the role and quality of Hispanic American leadership in the education of Hispanic American children."

If the educational programs of the Great Society accomplished nothing else, it was the development of Hispanic American leadership in the field of education. Unfortunately, much of this leadership was developed as a result of the federal effort and was unavailable to provide direction to the movement in its formative stage. The emerging leadership now finds itself struggling to cope with institutionalized, dysfunctional responses; competitiveness in the acquisition of resources; and the dissipation of their energies in fighting backlashes and defending the rationale for programmatic activities. The initial Hispanic leadership - vocal, revolutionary, and daring - has been extensively augmented by a second generation better characterized as recipients of the fruits of the movement rather than advocators and initiators.

In some cases, emerging Hispanic American leaders found themselves in a powerful position as spokespersons and brokers in the civil rights movement. Being selected as representatives of the ethnic group, they then proceeded to act as stopcocks to prevent an increasing number of ethnic minorities to dilute their power and privileged position.

Other minority professionals quickly forgot or never understood the efforts which led to their upward mobility and became tools for the implementation and institutionalization of dysfunctional responses. Persons in these leadership positions are characterized by their impartiality, and take great pains to assure and prove to the establishment their loyalty and assimilation. Their biggest concern is that any action on their part which is directed toward the enhancement of educational opportunities for Hispanic American children be interpreted as reverse discrimination. Unfortunately, Hispanic Americans have neither a system of accountability for their educational leadership, nor the mechanisms for the removal of dysfunctional personnel. Efforts to obtain ethnic representation at the high decision-making levels has been so difficult that the lack of acceptable performance is easily tolerated. In addition to this, there is the constant fear that any remedial action on the part of ethnic minorities will result in "throwing out the baby with the bath water," or the aggravating of a bad situation into a more deplorable one.

The increasing realization that progress in the education of Hispanic Americans has been limited, that promises have not been fulfilled, that forward movement is consistently followed by back-sliding and the ever present White backlash should lead Hispanic Americans to re-group and redirect their efforts. The obvious solution is that the Hispanic American must develop, organize, and implement new coalitions directed toward a common cause. Civic, lay, and professional organizations representing massive numbers of Hispanic Americans must bind together to implement a political strategy in support of

functional educational programs. This coalesence must not only exist within the ethnic group, but must reach out to other segments of the population. Coalitions with Blacks, women, labor, liberals, and other groups are essential if the Hispanic Americans are to develop the political strength necessary for success in their efforts. This political strength is essential if their children are to enjoy equality of educational opportunity.

The education of Spanish-speaking children is a problem of incremental concerns for the future.

Out of 62 million children in our country today, 11.2% or 8 million are Hispanic.

The federal government as well as educators throughout the country must realize that there are more Hispanic children in the United States than there are children of any other minority group and the number is increasing both in absolutes and in percentages, with a rate of increase 2½ times greater than for non-Hispanics.

The implication of these numbers is that there is an imperative need for a massive, continuous and successful effort in meeting the educational needs of this large and rapidly growing group.

Future societies may well judge this generation by the treatment afforded to these children today.

Just as history views the anti-bellum South by its treatment of the enslaved Black population, future historians may well judge this society by today's injustices. Future history books will probably dwell on the heartless breakup of Hispanic families by immigration officials as mothers illegally working in Maryland farms are deported while their young American born children stay behind.

Historians will long question the humanness of state legislatures which deny education to children on the basis of their parents' legal status and ability to pay.

Historians will no doubt question the sincerity and effectiveness of federal and state educational structures in school systems where the dropout rate of Hispanics today is in excess of 95 percent.

Going one step further, I would like the federal government to clarify its conflicting positions on bilingual education and cultural diversity.

In recent months we have seen top-level spokesmen for the federal government backtrack on the federal commitment with assurances that bilingual education is solely a vehicle for the acquisition of English language skills and not a vehicle for language and cultural diversity.

This constraint on federal support for bilingual education forms a strange paradox when contrasted with other commitments.

It is not compatible with the federal commitment to and support of languages other than English at the secondary and higher education levels.

This constraint on bilingual education is certainly not compatible with the position taken by the brand-new U.S. Commission on the International Year of the Child, which recently stated in its first order of business a commitment to language and cultural diversity.

And this constraint is not compatible with State Department foreign policy which for the first time in many years allows American representatives to meet with representatives from other countries without looking down or speaking down to them.

I can only hope that, as a result of our gathering, responsible persons will follow through with the necessary vehicles for new strategies and a new effort in the education of this country's Hispanic population.

I hope that HEW will establish a liaison effort necessary to provide long-range, comprehensive, and sensible programs so that all children in our land will one day enjoy equality of educational opportunity.